

adoption

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS





ADOPTION—QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

This is the first in a series of pamphlets about adoption and is intended to provide answers to some of the basic questions that are often asked. In general, these are the short answers and further information and pamphlets can be obtained from any office of the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Education.

- **WHAT IS ADOPTION?**

Adoption is the legal method by which a child becomes a member of a family other than that into which he was born. It establishes a legal relationship of parent and child between persons who are not blood-related. This means that the adopted child becomes the true child of the adopting parents as though he had been born to them.

- **WHICH CHILDREN NEED TO BE ADOPTED?**

All children need and want parents of their own. They need love, guidance, and the feeling that someone cares. Not all children begin life in this fortunate position. The majority of children available for adoption are those whose parent or parents are unable to provide for them in these ways.

- **WHAT KINDS OF PARENTS DO THEY NEED?**

Parents who will love the child and let the child love them, and who are able to give him the care and guidance he will need.

Most people can be adoptive parents. All that is needed is: a happy marriage, good health, and the ability to provide for a child.

Home ownership, high income, or large savings are NOT required. People are sought who are able to live within their income and make adequate provision for the additional expenses involved in caring for a child.

- **ARE THERE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS?**

Yes. There is a continuing need for homes for children with handicaps, which may range from such easily-corrected defects as an extra toe or finger or a hernia to club feet, a cleft palate or heart defects.

It takes a person with extra personal (and sometimes financial) resources to undertake the care of some of these children, but those who have the capacity and desire to do so often find the task deeply rewarding.

- ARE ALL CHILDREN IN CHILDREN'S HOMES, FOSTER HOMES AND INSTITUTIONS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION?

No. Many are there for reasons which have required them to live temporarily away from their own homes. Unless their parents have specifically given their consent, these children cannot be adopted by anyone.

- HOW OLD SHOULD ADOPTING PARENTS BE?

The Adoption Act 1955 states that, except in special circumstances, one of the applicants must have reached 25 years of age and be at least 21 years older than the child.

- CAN SINGLE PEOPLE ADOPT?

Yes; but within certain limitations which can be discussed with a Child Welfare social worker.

CAN FAMILIES WHO HAVE OTHER CHILDREN ADOPT?

Yes. Many children find homes with families who already have children. Families who want to add to their numbers may adopt a child so long as they can meet the usual requirements of adoptive parents.

- CAN WORKING MOTHERS ADOPT?

This always needs to be determined individually but it is possible where a satisfactory plan for the care of the child is arranged.

- CAN A CHILD AND ADOPTING PARENTS BE MATCHED?

Adoptive parents often want "a child like us". That is, they hope he will look like them, come from a similar racial and cultural background, and be in most respects the sort of child they would hope to have produced themselves.

A person arranging an adoption placement will, to the extent that is desired or possible, try to match applicants and child. She will consider family history, colouring, apparent level of intelligence, and so on. She will also take into account the wishes, if any, expressed by the child's mother and/or father as to his placement. This applies especially to the question of religious upbringing.

- **WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF THE PARENTS THE CHILD WAS BORN TO?**

The parent or parents of the child can:

- Decide whether or not the child is available for adoption; only in rare cases is a child available for adoption without at least the mother's consent.
- Exercise a right to nominate the religious denomination in which they wish the child to be brought up.

Once a Court order in respect of the adoption is made, the parent or parents have no further rights.

- ARE ADOPTIVE PARENTS TOLD ABOUT THE CHILD'S BACKGROUND?

Information about the health, racial origins and intellectual background of the child and of his parents (as far as is known) will be shared with the applicants, since this makes it possible for parents to understand their child better. The child's original identity will not be disclosed to anyone.

- SHOULD AN ADOPTED CHILD BE TOLD OF HIS ADOPTION?

Experience indicates that it is important for a child to be told of his adoption. It is always possible that he will find out, and this information can best come from his adoptive parents. If they demonstrate happiness at having chosen him to be their own child, he will grow up being proud of the fact that he has been adopted.

- **IS THERE MUCH RED TAPE IN ADOPTING?**

No. It is necessary to find out what kind of people the applicants are and what kind of child will be best with them. To do this there are interviews and home visits. For a period of 6 months following the Court's interim approval of the placement, a social worker will call periodically to discuss progress.

- **DOES ADOPTING TAKE YEARS?**

At the present time, getting a child often takes less than a year. The length of time varies, depending upon the availability of the kind of child the applicants are seeking.

Since adoption is a lifetime plan, it is important that enough time be spent in preparation, to be as sure as possible that it is the right plan.

- **WHAT IS THE COST IN ADOPTING?**

The only cost is the solicitor's fee for the necessary legal arrangements involved in adoption.

HOW CAN A SUITABLE CHILD BE LOCATED?

You may already know of a child who is or will be available for adoption. If so, you should know that you are not entitled to take the child into your home until you have a written approval from a Child Welfare social worker (or you may choose to go directly to the Magistrate's Court for an interim adoption order in which case a solicitor could advise you; however, in the vast majority of cases, applicants seek Child Welfare approval first). This approval cannot be given until the social worker has had ample opportunity to investigate your circumstances, to obtain references and a police clearance to be sure of your suitability

to care for the child in question. These enquiries take time.

If you have no particular child in mind and would like help in locating one you can:

- Have your name put on a list at your nearest Child Welfare Office;

Apply to a home which caters for unmarried mothers or to the Matron of your local maternity hospital. In such cases, approval is still necessary as above before the child can be taken into your home.

- **HOW CAN WE FIND OUT MORE ABOUT ADOPTION ?**

Do not hesitate to get in touch with your nearest Child Welfare Office which is listed in the telephone directory under Government Departments—Education.



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